

Sen. Roger Sherman, Chair
Sen. Thomas Martin Jr.
Sen. John Patrick
Rep. Joyce Maker, Chair
Rep. Bernard Ayotte
Rep. Margaret Rotundo

Heather Parent
Stephen Cole
Michael Herz
Michael Hiltz
Connie Jones



Wade Merritt
John Palmer
Linda Pistner
Harry Ricker
Michael Roland
Jay Wadleigh
Joseph Woodbury

Staff:
Lock Kiermaier

STATE OF MAINE

Citizen Trade Policy Commission

August 1, 2012

The Honorable Ronald Kirk
Trade Ambassador
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20508

Re: "Country-of-Origin" Labeling Issue

Dear Ambassador Kirk:

As you may know, the Citizen Trade Policy Commission (CTPC) is required by current Maine Law (10 MRSA Chapter 1-A) to provide an ongoing state-level mechanism to assess the impact of international trade policies and agreements on Maine's state and local laws, business environment and working conditions.

During the most recent meeting of the CTPC on July 11, 2012, the commission considered the issue of "Country of Origin" labeling as it pertains to certain provisions of trade agreements administered by the World Trade Organization (WTO). It is our understanding that in recent months, the WTO has handed down three decisions which have invalidated certain U.S. laws and regulations pertaining to country-of-origin labeling; specifically the federal Country of Origin Labeling Act (COOL) has been accused by the WTO as having violated international trade rules.

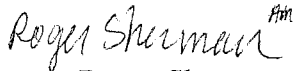
During our review of this issue, the CTPC was informed that the USTR is assessing exactly what steps should be taken with regards to the adverse WTO rulings but no specific information was provided regarding exactly what options are available and under contemplation. Accordingly, because the provisions of COOL and other similar federal and state legislation are so crucial to issues surrounding state sovereignty, the CTPC requests that you respond to the following questions:

1. Exactly what parties, organizations or individuals are you consulting with regarding the recent WTO decisions which invalidate the federal COOL legislation?; and
2. What courses of action are the USTR considering in response to the recent adverse decisions from the WTO?

In making these and other recommendations, members of the CTPC expressed a clear desire to further discuss these subjects in detail with either of you in the context of a public meeting held by the CTPC. We invite you or senior members of your staff to appear at such a public meeting at a date that is mutually satisfactory and as an alternative to you traveling to Maine, we suggest that a conference call could be arranged on a date to be determined in the near future.

On behalf of the CTPC, we thank you for your attention to our significant concerns about the adverse WTO decisions with regards to Country-of-Origin labeling requirements that we have raised and we look forward to discussing these issues with you in more detail.

Sincerely,



Senator Roger Sherman, Chair



Representative Joyce Maker, Chair

c: Governor Paul LePage
Senator Olympia Snowe
Senator Susan Collins
Representative Michael Michaud
Representative Chellie Pingree
Maine State Representative Sharon Treat, member of Intergovernmental Policy Advisory Committee